



# STUDENTS' SATISFACTION ON SERVICE PROVIDED BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGES: A CASE OF SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGES IN ADAMA CITY ADMINISTRATION

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## ABSTRACT

Evaluation of students' satisfaction is found essential in understanding the level of their expectations and identify factors that become causes for students' withdrawal. Hence, this study intends to examine students' views regarding service quality that private University Colleges provide. The relationship between service quality and student satisfaction as well as factors of service quality that contribute most towards satisfaction of students were investigated in this study. In Adama City Administration there are five private University Colleges offering under graduate programs of which three were randomly taken for sample of this study. 200 questionnaires were distributed and 170 were duly filled and received. SERVQUAL model consisting of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy created by Parasuraman et al (1988) were used to measure student's perceptions on service quality. An exploratory research design is used and data is analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science software or IBM SPSS Statistics, version 23. This study reveals that there is a significant and positive relationship between tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy and student satisfaction. Among the various dimensions Reliability has the highest correlation with student satisfaction followed by Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Tangibility. Further, this study indicated that there is association between age, gender and students satisfaction. Furthermore, the result indicates that all the dimensions are highly correlated and very significant with one another.

**KEY WORDS:** Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), Satisfaction, Service Quality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has changed radically with the expansion of private tertiary education worldwide, leading to a demand for more public accountability as well as unconditional trust in the higher education institutions (Blackmore, 2005). Private higher education institutions are moving towards world-class university status. As such, the enhancement of quality teaching will aid to produce quality graduates. Quality teaching and learning has become one of the most important determinants of learning outcomes in higher education institutions today.

Many institution of higher education take great pride in promoting and recognizing teaching quality through workshops, award programmes and etc (Broder and Dorfman, 1994). As such, lecturers in higher education shall explore some of the methods and techniques in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

The evaluation of students' satisfaction level and their perception towards the value accorded of service provided is essential to enhance the advancement of service being provided approaches and methods in the future.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between service quality and customer (students) satisfaction has been extensively studied by many researchers. Ghobadian, Speller & Jones (1997) concluded that organizations with higher perceived quality goods and services enjoy higher long term economic benefits. The correlation between customers' satisfaction and the quality of goods and services had forced the organizations to assess their customer satisfaction level to continuously improve their quality.

The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al (1988) sought to set a general instrument for measuring service quality. Five dimensions were used to evaluate customers' perception on the service quality i.e. tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Parasuraman et al (1998) proposed that the service quality can be measured by looking at the degree of discrepancy between customers' normative expectation for the service and their perception of the service performance.

In an investigation of what is important to students in determining teaching quality, Broder and Dorfman (1994) found that teacher's characteristics such as enthusiasm for teaching; knowledge of the subject; ability to tie information together, stimulate thinking and maintain interest; and the amount of new, useful and relevant knowledge gained, were important to students.

As a result of expansion of higher institutions, a variety of challenges mainly in terms service quality and resources available for financing the system becoming crucial events whereas the private institutions are growing most quickly in terms of financial gain (The World Bank and UNESCO, 2000)

Philip G. Altbachpatti and McGill Peterson (1999) revealed that higher education has profoundly changed in the past two decades, and those involved in the academic enterprise have yet to struggle with the implications of these changes. He added that academic institutions and systems have faced pressures of increasing

numbers of students and demographic changes, demands for accountability, reconsideration of the social and economic role of higher education, and the impact of new technologies.

Enhancing service quality in higher education is absolutely crucial in enabling higher education institutions to produce the critically-thinking, creative, adaptable graduates who will shape the future. And yet, while it should be the centre of gravity of higher education, quality service of teaching in universities and colleges is often overlooked and undervalued (Report to the European Commission, on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions 2013)

In most universities in Africa, the population explosion, expansion of student enrollments, the types of degree programs offered, and the poor economic situation have all contributed to high levels of unemployment among university graduates. Universities in Africa must ensure that their degree programs have the potential to get graduates employed.

Universities have to strive aggressively tackling the challenges of unemployment by preparing students to respond to the growing opportunities for self-employment. Such approach can be practiced through reviewing the programs and methods of teaching and making them responsive to market demands.

As evidenced by the number of institutions of higher learning, the pace of expansion have found enormous and in which the current growth exceeds the capacity of African economies to meet the high demand for university education. The demand for higher education is also illustrated by the number of students seeking to attend universities abroad (Philip G. Altbachpatti and McGill Peterson (Institute of International Education and Council on International Exchange of Scholars (1999).

In spite of its cost demanding nature, higher education is drastically in growth worldwide, through enhancing interest and increasing demands for more higher educations. Study reveals that higher education institutions are alarmingly expanding to place themselves in world-class university status.

It is customary that every private higher institution is striving to meet customers (students) expectations. An expectation that cannot be fulfilled on the institutions is the key factors for students' withdrawal (Alridge and Rowley, 2001 quoted by Hishamuddin Fitri Abu Hasan).

## III. METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS STUDY

### Research Objective

The general purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction of Private University Colleges and to identify factors of service quality that contribute most towards students' satisfaction.

### Research Questions

1. Which factors in service quality contribute most to the satisfaction of the students?

2. Is there any relationship between service quality dimensions and students' satisfaction?
3. Is there any association between demographic factors such as gender and age and satisfaction of the students

#### Hypothesis used in this study

##### Hypothesis 1

**H1<sub>1</sub>:** There is no relationship between service quality dimensions and students' satisfaction across university colleges in Adama city, Ethiopia.

**H1<sub>2</sub>:** There is relationship between service quality dimensions and students' satisfaction across university colleges in Adama city, Ethiopia.

##### Hypothesis 2

**H2<sub>1</sub>:** There is no association between gender and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

**H2<sub>2</sub>:** There is association between gender and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

##### Hypothesis 3

**H3<sub>1</sub>:** There is no association between age and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

**H3<sub>2</sub>:** There is association between age and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

#### Research design

This study uses an exploratory research design as it is found to be most suitable for this kind of study. According to Zikmund (2000), exploratory research is conducted to clarify and get a better understanding of the nature of the problem, also exploratory research is advantageous because it is flexible and adaptable to change (Saunders & Thornhill (2003)).

#### Sampling

The target population of this study is students of private higher educational institutions operating in Adama city. There are 5 private university colleges offering under graduate programs in Adama, these are Rift Valley University College, Harambee University college, Unity University college, Paradise valley university college and Royal University college. This study used students of Harambee University College, Paradise Valley University College and Royal University College as respondents. 200 questionnaires were distributed to students who were randomly selected. Out of this 170 questionnaires were duly filled and received.

#### Instrumentation

This study uses both primary and secondary data sources. The primary source of data is questionnaire. Instrument used in this research is adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1990) using the five dimensions in service quality that is tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness and empathy. A five point Likert scale was used to measure all the statements (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). In order to test the reliability of the scale used, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The questionnaire contained a total of 35 questions (in the variable Tangibility, there were 10 questions, Assurance had 7 questions, Reliability was tested using 6 questions, Responsiveness with 5 questions and Empathy with 7 questions)

#### Method of Data Analysis

Data collected using a modified servqual questionnaire of Parasuraman (1990) was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to discuss the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age and gender. Further mean and standard deviation were also used to assess each variable. This study uses Chi square measure to establish association between demographic characteristics of respondents and satisfaction towards service quality. In addition to this correlation is used establish relationship between variables. The data analysis for this study conducted through 'Statistical Package for Social Science' software or IBM SPSS Statistics, version 23.

#### IV. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

##### Response rate

A total number of 200 questionnaires were distributed to final year degree students of three University Colleges viz. Harambee University College, Royal University College and Paradise Valley University College. Out of this, 170 questionnaires were duly filled and returned implying a response rate of 85 %.

##### Profile of the respondents

The demographic information of the respondents related to age and gender. It was found that 46.5 % (79) of the respondents were male while 53.5 % (91) were female. About 68.8 % (117) were in the age group of 20 – 25 years, where as 21.8 % were in the age group 26 – 31 years. 9.1% of the respondents were about the age of 31 years.

#### Reliability test

Cronbach's alpha is used to test the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's alpha is a measure used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of scale or test items (Cronbach, 1970). A commonly accepted rule for describing internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 is considered acceptable and anything more than 0.7 is considered a good indication of reliability of constructs. The calculated Cronbach's alpha as per Table 1 for different variables is 0.848 for Tangibility, 0.834 for Assurance, 0.878 for Reliability, 0.878 for Responsiveness and 0.835 for Empathy.

**Table 1 showing individual dimension Cronbach's Alpha**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Tangibility	.848	10
Assurance	.834	7
Reliability	.878	6
Responsiveness	.878	6
Empathy	.835	7

Source: Researchers own computation from Questionnaire

The calculated Cronbach's alpha's for all the dimensions is more than 0.7, thereby indicating good constructs reliability.

#### Other descriptive

In order to answer the research question regarding factors of service quality that contribute most to the satisfaction of the students, mean scores and ranking method are used.

**Table 2 showing service factors affecting student satisfaction**

Serqual dimensions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (score out of 5)	Std. Deviation	Rank
Tangibility	170	1.67	4.78	3.46	.75781	3
Assurance	170	2.29	5.00	3.75	.71608	1
Reliability	170	1.33	5.00	3.36	.96747	5
Responsiveness	170	1.40	4.80	3.37	.76337	4
Empathy	170	1.71	4.71	3.5	.79703	2

Source: Researchers own computation from Questionnaire

Table 1 shows over all mean scores of serqual dimensions as perceived by the respondents. Respondents consider Assurance as a critical service factor contributing towards service quality satisfaction, with a mean score of 3.75 (out of 5), followed by Empathy (3.50 out of 5). The next perceived serqual dimension is Tangibility (3.45), followed by Responsiveness (3.37) and Reliability (3.36).

#### Hypothesis Testing

##### Hypothesis 1:

**H1<sub>1</sub>:** There is no relationship between service quality dimensions and students' satisfaction across university colleges in Adama city, Ethiopia.

**H1<sub>2</sub>:** There is relationship between service quality dimensions and students' satisfaction across university colleges in Adama city, Ethiopia.

**Table 3 Showing Pearson's Correlation Analysis**

	Tangibility	Assurance	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy	Student satisfaction
Tangibility	1					
Assurance	.760	1				
Reliability	.759	.805	1			
Responsiveness	.736	.666	.773	1		
Empathy	.860	.789	.761	.735	1	
Student satisfaction	.719	.777	.973	.768	.729	1

Source: Researchers own computation from Questionnaire

Table 3 indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy and student satisfaction. Among the various dimensions Reliability ( $r = 0.973$ ) has the highest correlation with student satisfaction followed by Assurance ( $r = 0.777$ ), Responsiveness ( $r = 0.768$ ), Empathy ( $r = 0.729$ ), and Tangibility ( $r = 0.719$ ). Furthermore, the results indicate that all the dimensions are highly correlated and very significant with one another. Therefore, the results proven that the service quality dimensions (tangibility, assurance, responsiveness, reliability and empathy) have a significant

cant relationship with students' satisfaction. The study results are consistent with Abu Hasan et.al (2008).

### Hypothesis 2

**H2<sub>0</sub>:** There is no association between gender and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

**H2<sub>1</sub>:** There is association between gender and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

Hypothesis 2 attempts to investigate whether there is any association between gender and satisfaction towards service provided among private institutions in Adama.

A cross tabulation shows that 46.5 % of the respondents are male while 53.5% are female. Therefore, a chi square test was conducted to test if there is any association between gender and service quality satisfaction.

$\chi^2 = 98.502$ ,  $df = 19$ , since  $p = 0.00$  which is less than 0.05, Therefore, Null hypothesis H20 is rejected and alternative hypothesis H21 is accepted, Thus it is concluded that at 5% level of significance there is association between gender and student satisfaction towards service quality. These findings are in line with that of Umbach & Porter, (2002) and Perry, Sekelsy and Skarsten, (2003)

### Hypothesis 3

**H3<sub>0</sub>:** There is no association between age and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

**H3<sub>1</sub>:** There is association between age and satisfaction of the student towards service provided

A cross tabulation of age with service quality satisfaction shows that About 68.8 % (117) were in the age group of 20 – 25 years, where as 21.8 % were in the age group 26 – 31 years. 9.1% of the respondents were about the age of 31 years. Therefore, a chi square test was conducted to test if there is any association between age and service quality satisfaction.

$\chi^2 = 168.663$ ,  $df = 57$ , since  $p = 0.00$  which is less than 0.05, Therefore, Null hypothesis H30 is rejected and alternative hypothesis H31 is accepted, Thus it is concluded that at 5% level of significance there is association between age and satisfaction level of the student towards service quality. This is not consistent with the findings of other researchers such as Carey, et al. (2002) who found that there is no any significant relationship between age and satisfaction.

### V. CONCLUSIONS:

From the discussion above it is clear that service quality has positive relationship with student satisfaction. This study confirms what literature emphasizes, that by improving service quality private higher education institutions may potentially increase student satisfaction.

This study further reveals that that there is a significant and positive relationship between tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and student satisfaction. Among the various dimensions Reliability has the highest correlation with student satisfaction followed by Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Tangibility.

Furthermore, the results indicate that all the dimensions are highly correlated and very significant with one another. Therefore, the results prove that the service quality dimensions (tangibility, assurance, responsiveness, reliability and empathy) have a significant relationship with students' satisfaction. Further, this study also reveals that there is association between age and student satisfaction and gender and level of satisfaction of students.

### Scope for further research

Service quality is widely accepted as a pre requisite of satisfaction and hence, neglecting service quality will affect the competitiveness of institutions for satisfaction and competitiveness of services provided are highly interrelated. Since this study is limited to only three private university colleges in Adama city, it is suggested that a comparative study of public higher institutions and private higher institutions is taken up by other to investigate whether there are any differences in service quality and student satisfaction.

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